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ABSTRACT

This report reviews the availability, licensure, and preparation of special education administrators in K-12 public school districts. It notes that the shortage of special education administrators is difficult to measure due to variations in licensure and certification requirements among states. Individual sections of the report address the following topics: supply and demand of special education administrators; preparation program availability, content, and standards-driven reforms for special education leadership preparation; certification and licensure; and support and development of the special education work force. It finds that preservice training has fluctuated and that there are fewer training programs available than previously. Training has shifted more to on-the-job or been absorbed by general educational administration programs. A major problem facing special education administrators is the recruitment, retention, and professional development of special education personnel. Special education administrators are challenged to promote collaboration between general and special education teachers and to collaborate with principals in order to assure that high quality educational programs are accessible to all students. (Contains 34 references.) (DB)

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Special Education Administration at a Crossroads: Availability, Licensure, and Preparation Of Special Education Adminstrators

Prepared for the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education and the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

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COPSSE research is focused on the preparation of special education professionals and its impact on beginning teacher quality and student outcomes. Our research is intended to inform scholars and policymakers about advantages and disadvantages of preparation alternatives and the effective use of public funds in addressing personnel shortages.

In addition to our authors and reviewers, many individuals and organizations have contributed substantially to our efforts, including Drs. Erling Boe of the University of Pennsylvania and Elaine Carlson of WESTAT. We also have benefited greatly from collaboration with the National Clearinghouse for the Professions in Special Education, the Policymakers Partnership, and their parent organizations, the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

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ABSTRACT

This issue brief reviews the availability, licensure, and preparation of special education administrators in K-12 public school districts. The shortage of special education administrators is difficult to measure due to variations in licensure and certification requirements between states. Pre-service training has fluctuated, and there are fewer training programs available. Training has been shifted to on-the-job or absorbed by educational administration programs. A major problem facing special education administrators is the recruitment, retention, and professional development of special education personnel. The level of administrative support special education personnel receive affects retention. Special education administrators are now at a crossroads in the evolution of the field. Their challenge will be promoting collaboration between general and special education teachers and administrators to assure that high quality educational programs are accessible to all students.

INTRODUCTION

Special education administration is located at the intersection of the disciplines of special education, general education, and educational administration. Historically, special education has provided much of the intellectual, practical, and personnel traffic to that intersection. The preparation, licensure, and availability of special education administrators has been dominated by assumptions, practices, and knowledge traditions of the disciplines of special education. This results in preparation that is too narrow for today's needs. During the 1990s, accountability for performance results and high standards drove educational reform, and efforts to educate students with disabilities in the general education classroom became the focus of special educators. These simultaneous initiatives require special education administrators to be well versed in the knowledge and skills from the disciplines of general education and educational administration. Becoming an effective special education leader for the 21st Century requires that administrators work collaboratively with teachers, parents, other school administrators, and policymakers to bring resources, personnel, programs, and expertise together to solve problems of practice for all students.

Our purpose in this paper is to review availability, licensure and certification,[1] and preparation of special education administrators in K-12 public school districts with emphasis on their roles in maintaining a quality work force in special education. For this review, special education administrators are those individuals who work in school districts to lead, supervise, and manage the provision of special education and related services for students with disabilities. Special education administrators are responsible for implementing the provisions of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), state and local statutes as well as policies and procedures that stipulate a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students with disabilities.

We have focused primarily on literature from 1990 to the present to review current research regarding the preparation, licensure, and availability of special education administrators. In some cases, literature prior to 1990 is cited to establish historical perspective. Sources included professional journals, dissertations, research reports, federal and state documents and websites, and websites from educational organizations. We also reviewed literature on teacher recruitment and retention, teacher induction, and professional development to recommend actions that special education administrators can apply to building and maintaining a work force of quality special education and related services professionals.

Special education administrators have played a critical role in the evolution of the field. The future challenge for special education administrators will be promoting collaboration between general and special education teachers and administrators to assure that high quality educational programs are accessible to all students regardless of ability.

[1] Some states treat educational endorsement to practice as a licensure process, while others treat it as a certification process. This paper uses the terms interchangeably.

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The commonly asked question, "What can we do to create and sustain an adequate flow of special education administrators?" generates multiple answers, because states vary widely in how they endorse and certify (or avoid endorsing or certifying) special education administrators. Some states have decided the role of special education administrator is unimportant and have filled this position with administrators not trained in special education or special education administration. While some states have been quite rigorous, clearly defining competencies and expectations for special education administrators, other states have no such definitions or guidelines. The absence of national competencies that define the role of special education administrators for all states makes it difficult to measure administrative shortages in special education administration.

The Council of Exceptional Children (CES), in conjunction with the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), is developing national competencies that would be applied to accredit training programs by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). This catalyst for standardization across the United States could facilitate more accurate determination of special education administrator shortages.

Although the shortage of administrators in general has been widely reported, there has been less attention to the shortage of special education administrators. Arick and Krug (1989) found in a local survey of special education directors that approximately 40% of all special education administrative jobs would be open in the next four years in Oregon. At the time of their study, 25% of the positions were unfilled. In 1993, Arick and Krug reported the national shortage of special education administrators was 10%. Of the 1,453 districts, 55 districts reported 148 unfilled positions; and 91 districts had 146 positions filled by interim appointments. Arick and Krug (1993) projected that 789 of the 1,444 districts responding to the questionnaire would experience vacancies over the next four years. Over half (55%) of the districts expected to replace approximately two special education administrative positions. Districts reported replacements due to: retirement, 26%; job change, 33%; moving out of area, 12%; and other reasons, under 1%.

According to the Wisconsin Teacher Supply and Demand Project (1998), 13.3% of 264 directors of special education in 1997-98 were new. Wisconsin anticipated a 6.3% attrition rate at the time. During this same period of time, Massachusetts lost 1% of its special education administrators to retirement, 2.4% voluntarily resigned, 3% did not have their contracts renewed, 25.9% transferred to other positions within the system, and 32% were newly hired (Massachusetts DOE Data, 1998).

As early as 1992-93 in the U. S. Department of Education's 17th Annual Report (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 1995), there were indications of special education administration shortages nationally. At the local education agency (LEA) level, 15,791 special education administrators and supervisors were employed and 1,176 more were needed. That same year, 1,064 special education administrators were employed at the state education agency (SEA) level with 130 needed.

According to the 22nd Annual Report (2000), there were 175 vacant administrator and special education supervisor positions based on 1999 data (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2000). Of the 15,166 administrators and supervisors of special education that were employed, 754 were not fully certified. The only certainty is that these administrators did not meet the certification requirements for their state, regardless of the comprehensiveness of the requirements. At the SEA level, 956 administrators were fully certified, 14 were not fully certified, and there were 70 vacant positions.

The number of vacancies reported and projections of retirements and transfers to other positions indicate that a significant number of special education administration positions will be open and that individuals will not be available to fill those positions. LEA shortage reports often depend on the number of satisfactory candidates that a district has to fill a position. If there are not a sufficient number of applicants or if no one from that pool fits district qualifications, then a case can be made for a shortage in the number of qualified applicants. The present number of vacancies and unfilled positions indicates that districts are experiencing a shortage of special education administrators and that these numbers may be even greater than current reports suggest.

PREPARATION

Analyzing the preparation of special education administrators involves two factors: (a) availability of pre-service preparation programs, and (b) the content of those programs. While research about the preparation of special education administrators is limited, we have concluded that: (a) preparation programs are linked to state certification requirements (Jones, Robinett, & Wells, 1994); (b) there is considerable confusion about preparation and certification requirements (Hirth & Valesky, 1990, 1991; Jones et al., 1994); (c) there are relatively few preparation programs that are oriented specifically to special education administration (Jones et al., 1994; National Clearinghouse on the Professions in Special Education [NCPSE], 2001), and (d) standards-based, outcome-driven reforms will have a significant impact on the preparation of special education administrators.

Preparation Program Availability

Finkenbinder (1981) intended to identify and establish the state of the art in the practice of special education administration and supervision. "Although the administration of special education programs has been a growing field, the lack of literature about it persists" (p. 488). There was a token effort in the '60s to establish training programs. However, institutions of higher education did not develop formal programs of study until the '70s (Finkenbinder, 1981). Some of the programs developed in the '70s have since disappeared.

After their efforts to ascertain the availability of personnel preparation programs from each state's CSPD representative were inconclusive, Jones et al. (1994) surveyed faculty members in institutions of higher education to determine the availability, location, characteristics, and requirements of special education administration preparation programs. Their survey of 212 programs contacted indicated that 18 IHEs offered limited course work in special education administration, 21 offered certification-only programs, and 11 offered a degree program—nine at the doctoral level and two at the specialist level. Jones et al. (1994) limited their research to degrees beyond the Master's since the U. S. Department of Education requires that programs funded through its Personnel Preparation Division support training at the doctoral or specialist level only.

Jones et al. (1994) found that 7 of the 11 degree-granting programs were housed in the IHE's Special Education department, 2 were housed in Educational Administration departments, and 2 were housed jointly. Our review of the NCPSE'S Database of College and University Programs (2001) yielded information from 27 institutions of higher education that provide advanced training in special education administration. Six of these programs were housed in departments of educational administration, nineteen were housed in special education departments, and two were housed in joint arrangements. Only two of the programs listed in the Jones et al. (1994) study were included in the NCPSE database.

Programs required from two to four courses related directly to special education administration, with the exception of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which offered nine such courses. Courses in the legal principles of special education and in the supervision of

special education were most often mentioned. Programs required two to six courses in educational administration and additional courses in research and content areas. With one exception, all certification and degree-granting programs required an internship. Ancarrow (1995) found that 12,500 students received advanced degrees in educational administration and supervision, including only 9 Master's degrees and 11 doctoral degrees in special education administration.

Preparation Program Content

At the federal level, leadership training grants have been provided to higher education institutions for the purpose of training special education administrators. Since the inception of the leadership training grants, there has been a shift in the definition of leadership training. The category has been broadened to include areas outside special education administration, assuming that any student obtaining an advanced degree qualifies as a leader. The erosion in the number of leadership training grants offered to institutions of higher education has contributed to the decline in the number of training programs and students of special education administration. Because these students are older and further along in their careers, entering a special education administration preparation program represents a significant financial sacrifice. Many have families and children by the time they decide to pursue this area of study.

Early competencies identified for the successful practice of special education administration included knowledge of the following areas: disabilities in children, school law, general education, vocational education, curriculum and instruction, effective interventions, budgeting, finance, negotiation and conflict resolution, due process, professional development, personnel and program evaluation and supervision, administrative duties, supervisory/consultative duties, service delivery, planning, organization, management, coordination, teacher assistance teams, and family issues around disabilities (Finkenbinder, 1981; Newman, 1970; O'Reilly & Squires, 1985; Voelker, 1966, summarization of the Mackie-Engle (1955) study).

In a 1993 survey, Arick and Krug found that special education directors, supervisors, or assistant supervisors spent 72% of their time engaged in special education administrative tasks, 21% on general education administrative tasks, and 7% was spent on other responsibilities. In this survey, the three highest-rated special education-related training needs were listed as collaboration between general and special educators, evaluation of program effectiveness and quality, and adaptation of curricula and instruction for students. An interesting aspect of Arick and Krug's (1993) study was their inquiry into the general education administrative competencies that special education administrators and supervisors thought would be beneficial. The three highest-rated general education administration training needs were developing grant proposals, planning information systems for program management, and creating strategies for facilitating collaboration. Unfortunately, the rankings performed by the special education directors in the Arick and Krug (1993) study were the result of forced choices given to the respondents; it is possible that the importance of other training needs was overlooked. For example, in the early 1990s the suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities was a major concern. This item did not appear specifically on the list but could be included under one of the more general categories. A more contemporary example would be the expressed need for training around school violence issues, statewide assessments of students with disabilities, and

access to the general education curriculum frameworks by students with disabilities. It should also be noted that the role of the special education administrator has shifted dramatically since its inception, from one where the primary concern was on effective interventions to one where the dominant concern currently is litigation.

Stile, Abernathy, & Pettibone (1986) noted that there were two tracks–general education and special education–present in the education systems they investigated in their study. Valesky and Hirth (1992) noted the need for general education administrators to have a knowledge of special education. These two studies stressed the need for reform in administrator training. Not only must training programs for general education administrators include special education competencies in the knowledge base, but special education administration training must also include general education administration competencies. Special education administrators must also have the competencies needed to provide special education professional development opportunities to their general administration colleagues.

Thirteen of the NCPSE Database (2001) programs were recipients of support for personnel preparation projects funded by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Information about the OSEP-funded programs indicates that mentoring relationships with practitioners, recruitment of minority personnel to leadership positions, and addressing the needs of minority students with disabilities are important themes in leadership preparation programs. Further, if we assume that OSEP funding priorities are intended to influence the direction of administrative preparation, then the following priorities must be addressed to receive funding from the fiscal 2002 Preparation of Leadership Personnel grants competition (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001) will be important themes in the curriculum of leadership preparation programs:

1. Understanding and working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, developing competencies necessary for working with these groups, and infusing those competencies into training programs

2. Coursework that emphasizes the participation of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum and practices that improve student outcomes

3. Relating research to practice in training programs and coursework

4. Preparing special education leaders who can collaborate and foster collaborative environments

5. Connecting the quality of services that program graduates provide to the goals and activities of the training program so that training program outcomes are linked to outcomes for children with disabilities in schools

6. Aligning training programs with state standards for children in schools.

Standards-Driven Reforms and Special Education Leadership Preparation

Currently, programs that prepare educators are participating in a wide range of standards-driven reform and accountability initiatives. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards have been interlinked and aligned to provide teacher education with a well-integrated set of expectations and outcomes upon which to base their practice. The Council for Exceptional Children's Institutional and Program Requirements are aligned with INTASC, NBPTS, and NCATE Standards to provide special education teacher educators with expectations and outcomes that are linked to those in general education.

The accrediting organizations cited above have joined together to develop special education administration leadership competencies that emphasize integration of expectations and outcomes. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has joined with NCATE to develop Performance-Based Standards for Special Education Administrators (2001). These standards address the following:

Standard 1: Foundations (philosophical, historical, and legal)

Standard 2: Characteristics of learners (human development, principles of learning)

Standard 3: Assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation

Standard 4: Instructional content and practice

Standard 5: Planning and managing the teaching and learning environment

Standard 6: Managing student behavior and social interactions

Standard 7: Communication and collaborative partnerships

Standard 8: Professionalism and ethics

The knowledge and skills embedded in these Standards are linked to the Common Core of the Performance-Based Standards for beginning special education teachers. The language and approaches suggested by these standards are grounded in the special education knowledge traditions. As a result, special education administration continues to be an activity that is separated from the general education program.

In cooperation with the Educational Leadership Constituent Council, NCATE's new Standards for Educational Administration, which are aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, address the following:

Standard 1: A shared vision of learning

Standard 2: Culture and programs conducive to student and personnel learning

Standard 3: Safe, efficient, and effective learning environments

Standard 4: Collaboration and working with the community

Standard 5: Ethical behavior

Standard 6: Understanding and influencing political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts

Standard 7: internships that are standards-based and cooperatively delivered by university and school district personnel

These standards are firmly grounded in current research on educational reform and accountability as well as in the general education and educational administration knowledge traditions. These standards continue to demonstrate a disregard for diverse populations by the general education administration establishment. No explicit acknowledgement of students with disabilities and the challenges special education programs bring to schools and districts are addressed by the standards.

As we can see from the CEC/NCATE and the ELCC/NCATE standards, the preparation of special education administrators reflects the existence of the dual systems of general and special education that have marked the history of efforts to educate children with disabilities. Like that of special education teachers, the preparation of special education administrators is often situated in a separate special education program or department and focuses on the special education knowledge tradition. While understanding the premises and assumptions of special education as a discipline is an important component of training for special education administrators, such a focus limits their capacity to engage in experiences that deepen their understandings of leadership, organizational dynamics, and general education. In turn, the combination of extensive special education expertise and limited leadership, organizational, and general education knowledge and skills exacerbates the division between general and special education, reducing opportunities to unify the dual system of education. We challenge educators responsible for preparing school leaders to address the needs of all students; they should develop approaches that integrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions from special education, general education, and educational administration. Prospective administrators must be equipped to forge new designs for inclusive, diverse, unified schools.

CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE

Certification and licensure vary widely between states. Stile et al. (1986) found 16 state education agencies had requirements for special education administrators, compared to 12 states in 1979 (Stile & Pettibone, 1980). Eighteen states reported endorsements in special education administration as part of a general administrative certificate. Twenty-three states offered a separate special education administration credential while six states offered a similar certificate at the supervisory level. One year later, Prillaman and Richardson (1985) found that 26 states had a separate endorsement for special education administrators compared to only 6 states in 1975. Twenty (20) states required an initial certificate in general administration to obtain an endorsement as a special education administrator.

Valesky and Hirth (1992) found that a special education administration endorsement was offered in conjunction with the receipt of a general education administrative certificate. The special education administrative endorsement was awarded by 33 states at the general administrative level, 47 states at the principal level, 39 states at the instructional supervisor level, and 47 states at the superintendent level. A completely separate endorsement for the administrator of special education was offered by 38 states (Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Compared to the data of Stile et al. (1986), there has been an increase in the offerings of special education administrative endorsements.

Alternate Paths to Certification and Licensure

The quality of certification and licensure requirements has been further compromised by the introduction of alternate paths. These alternate paths to certification and licensure are frequently sponsored by state departments of education in direct competition with the certification and licensure programs offered by institutions of higher education (IHE). The IHEs are often held to a much higher standard for certificate endorsement. Alternate paths to certification have proven to be more attractive to pre-service administrators because of their lower costs and shorter time commitments.

Some states (e.g. Illinois, Kentucky) have made significant efforts to coordinate their alternate paths to administrative certification with their public institutions of higher education. Other state departments of education have placed themselves in direct competition with their IHEs (e.g. Massachusetts, New Hampshire). Interestingly, New Hampshire has six paths to alternate certification (http://www.ed.state.nh.us/Certification/credenti.htm). Obtaining a certificate from an institution of higher education is the first alternative. The last alternate path is on-the-job training. The Illinois Alternative Certification Initiative includes an Administrative Alternative Certification Program (http://www.cait.org/aci). This program is presented in four phases commencing with an initial application, screening, and admission process and then progressing to an intensive 8-week summer program, followed by a year-long administrative appointment in an LEA, and culminating with a final assessment of progress of the pre-service administrator by the university supervisor, mentor, and LEA supervisor. The cost is $450 to participate in the initial assessment, and $7,500 for the 8-week course and one-year practicum.

Although many states have adopted alternate paths to certification, there is a dearth of research on alternate paths to administrative certification and certification of special education administrators. There is a great need for research to assess the efficacy of such programs by determining the effect on the delivery of services to students with disabilities and the retention of special education personnel.

State Professional Development Provisions for Special Education Administrators

The greatest change that Stile et al. (1986) found was in the number of state offices requiring special education coursework or demonstration of competency in special education as part of general education administration certification. Valesky and Hirth (1992) produced the only report with data about the professional development of in-service special education administrators. They reported that 75% of all states offer special education in-service training to administrators each year. Stile et al. (1986) did not address the provision of in-service training for veteran special education administrators at the LEA level. Compared to research on teaching improvement, very few research topics are directed toward improving administrator skills. While improving personnel skills is important, it is equally important for administrators to reflect on tasks that are germane to the actual administration and management of the programs for which they provide leadership. Given the paucity of research in the area of professional development for in-service special education administrators, this is an area that would benefit from further investigation.

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION WORK FORCE

Retaining certified and qualified personnel in special education is the ultimate challenge for special education administrators. Their roles in supporting and developing the special education work force involve the recruitment, retention, and professional development of special education teachers and related services professionals. Districts and special education administrators face a shortage of licensed and qualified personnel, which necessitates filling special education teaching positions with uncertified and untrained personnel. Gonzalez and Carlson (2001), reporting on the Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education, indicate that school districts recruited 69,249 special education teaching positions for the 1999-2000, hired 50,320 teachers, and left 12,241 positions unfilled. Working from data from the 22nd Annual Report, Carlson and Billingsley (2001) reported that approximately 9% of all special education teachers are not certified for their assignments, and they cited research indicating that 32% of new special education teachers are not certified. Clearly, recruiting additional teachers, developing their skills as special educators, and working to keep them in the field should be high priorities for special education administrators.

According to the *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners* report (Kozleski, Mainzer, & Deschler, 2000), there are eight pressing issues affecting the retention of special education teachers:

1. Special educator role definitions that are ambiguous and conflicting
2. Over-zealous procedural compliance
3. Lack of system supports for special educators
4. Mismatch between student needs and teacher activity
5. Teacher isolation
6. Diminished pool of potential special educators
7. Incompletely prepared new special educators
8. Fragmented, nonreciprocal teacher licensing systems.

Special education administrators must be able to develop district action plans that address each of these areas. While many administrators either explicitly or tacitly have acknowledged each of these issues at one time, few have made these issues a pressing priority and developed a formal solution. Personnel retention and recruitment are closely related. When personnel feel supported by their administrators they are less likely to leave, which in turn contributes to the attractiveness of the work place environment.

Our review of the literature regarding special education administrators' roles in supporting and developing the special education work force indicates that *administrative support* is critical to retaining special educators and improving their abilities to have a positive effect on outcomes for students with disabilities. In a study of teachers' working conditions in six urban school districts. Billingsley, Gersten, Gillman, and Morvant (1995) found that "teacher satisfaction, commitment, and intent to leave were all highly associated with administrative support" (p. i). By administrative support, they mean "treating teachers like knowledgeable professionals," "effective communication," and "provid...[ing] assistance to teachers by helping them with their needs" (pp. 2-3). The literature on the recruitment and retention of special education teachers suggests that important factors in administrative support, which district-level special education administrators can address, include:

1. A common vision of the purposes and goals of the special education program and effective communication systems that articulate the vision

2. Availability of resources and the over-burden of paper work

3. Provision of professional development

4. The crucial role of the school principal and the special education administrators' responsibility for developing principals' capacities to support special educators.

In order to address these issues, special education administrators must understand what teachers mean by administrative support. They must "periodically assess teachers' needs for support" (Billingsley, et al., 1995, p. 8) and make frequent contact, actively listen, and thoughtfully consider teacher points of view. A close relationship between special education professionals, general education teachers, and principals, in which views are shared and learning is valued, appear to be critical to teacher job satisfaction.

Vision and Communication

Studies on teacher dissatisfaction in special education point out special educators feel the need to know the purposes and directions of the special education program, want to have a voice in the decisions that affect their work, and want to know that their perspectives are listened to and respected. Cegelka and Doorlag (1995) found that teachers do not feel supported in the areas of "special education placement decisions, IEP development and monitoring, dealing with behavioral problems, selecting and implementing curriculum, and interacting with parents" (p. 5). In other words, special education teachers did not believe that they were supported in critical components of their jobs.

Gersten, Gillman, Morvant, & Billingsley (1995) argue that special education teachers experience a great deal of role conflict. They suggest that special educators are unable to prioritize the tasks they are asked to perform and that it appears to teachers that there are competing priorities in schools (e.g., Should they be concerned with compliance through paper work or providing what is best for students?). They also suggest that teachers do not believe that

they have a voice in the purposes and goals of the programs in which they work and, as a result, do not feel that decisions are made with their perspectives or interests in mind. Finally, Gersten et al. (1995) argue that teachers are "confused about what is expected of them in their jobs" (p. 6).

Gersten et al. (1995) suggest that increasing the flow of information to schools and teachers and using approaches "for meaningful shared decision-making" (p. 8) are necessary components to addressing teacher dissatisfaction with their job responsibilities. Billingsley, et al. (1995) found that teachers often felt that their lack of frequent, meaningful contact with district-level administrators indicated a lack of respect for their work. Further, their perception that district-level administrators were too far removed from teachers' daily work lives meant that decisions about their work were not well informed. Billingsley, et al. (1995) summarize by stating "and as one teacher put it, the important thing was not always in getting the resources, but rather in feeling that someone was out there advocating for her needs" (p. 5).

Resources and Paper Work

Our review of the research illustrates that administrators must reduce the paper work burden on special education and provide the resources teachers believe they need to do their jobs. Teachers cite time to do their work, large and disparate caseloads, availability of planning and collaboration time, excessive paper work, and lack of instructional resources as major restrictions on their abilities to do their jobs (Gersten et al., 1995). Gersten et al. (1995) argue that the number of tasks that special education teachers are required to do have "not been modified or redistributed in any way" (p. 8), and therefore opportunities for professional development and uses of planning time have eroded. SPeNSE (2001) reports that special education teachers spend five hours per week on paper work—about as much time as they spend on lesson planning. Using SPeNSE data, Carlson and Billingsley (2001) indicate that special education teachers believe that paper work interferes with teaching. Special education administrators can play an important role in utilizing technology and organizing work to reduce the burden that paper work and resource shortages present to special educators. To do this effectively, their decision making must be driven by teaching and learning and the needs of students rather than focusing solely on compliance with regulatory demands.

Professional Development

Teachers often cite their need for professional development. The number of new and uncertified teachers entering the field indicates that education, training, and professional socialization are important needs for special education teachers. Gersten et al. (1995) indicate that professional development that encourages interactions with other teachers who are engaged in similar work is critical to special education teacher job satisfaction. Wald (1998) suggests district-level administrators must arrange for professional development activities that support teacher's efforts to manage instruction and be an advocate for students. Throughout the studies in this literature review, teachers expressed the need to be connected with their peers through professional development networks. They expressed that the challenges of teaching students with disabilities

requires a continuing commitment to professional learning. Attention to the induction of new teachers, which is indicated in the NCATE and INTASC Standards and in projects like North Carolina's Performance-Based Licensure, is necessary to develop a high quality work force. All of these concerns point to the importance of a well-developed, systematic approach to professional development.

Principals

Our review of the literature indicates that principals' support for the work of special education teachers is critical to the recruitment and retention of special educators. Carlson and Billingsley (2001) report that school climate is an important factor in special education teachers' believing that their jobs are manageable, in their sense of efficacy, and in their intention to stay in the field. School principals are major factors in establishing school climate. Teachers report that the support of their building principal is crucial to their job satisfaction and their capacity to educate their students effectively (Billingsley et al., 1995). District-level special education administrators need to prepare school-level administrators to understand the roles and responsibilities of special educators (Wald, 1998).

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AT A CROSSROADS

The shortage of administrators is well-documented, and the shortage of special education teachers exacerbates the shortage of special education administrators. The preparation and licensure of special education administrators has not received sufficient attention in the past ten years. Research in leadership preparation has focused on principals and superintendents. Some work has been done regarding the role of principals in special education (Valesky & Hirth, 1992), but district-level administrators have not received research attention, even though they make critical programmatic and organizational decisions. In addition, the wide variety of approaches to certification and the resulting preparation requirements makes it difficult to determine the quality of the special education administration work force and the availability of qualified personnel. One avenue of research could determine: (a) the qualifications of persons who have filled special education administration positions, (b) how or whether they became certified, and (c) their preparation for the positions.

The preparation and licensure of special education administration reflects the dual systems of special and general education. The special education knowledge tradition is well represented in preparation and licensure of special education administrators. How special education administrators are prepared to work with their general education colleagues and to proceed toward a unified system of services remains to be seen. Further research in these areas could focus on how preparation can address issues like accountability, instructional improvement for all students, and increased collaboration between general and special education for instructional purposes and how professional development can be a tool to address these issues. The discourse on collaboration has been highly visible in providing tools for teachers as they work to include students with disabilities in general education. However, further research is needed to address how administrators can facilitate collaboration and how they will be prepared to foster collaborative environments where teachers work toward curriculum access for all students.

Some research that gives administrators and boards guidance about what they can do to recruit and retain quality special education teachers and related service professionals is available. We have focused on the actions special education administrators can take to improve the work lives of special educators by providing support through induction and professional development, reducing burdens (such as paper work and caseload), and securing resources for teachers.

Special education administration is located where special education, general education, and educational administration come together. Historically, the knowledge traditions and practices of special education have dominated the discourse in special education administration. As inclusive practice and accountability became important in American schools in the 1990s, a merger of general and special education to meet the educational needs of all students has been suggested (Burrello, Lashley, & Beatty, 2001; Villa & Thousand, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). Particularly, the ascendance of outcome accountability measures for all students has highlighted the necessity to apply all curricular, instructional, and assessment tools from both general and special education to the education of all students. As a result, special education administration has come to a crossroads as a practice. Special education and general education leaders will be challenged to join together to solve the problems of practice inherent in a diverse, complex, high-stakes educational environment.

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